

The Audience: Involved and In Motion



GOALS

- To discuss various types of audience participation in the journalistic process, from acting as sources to citizen journalism
- To provide an overview of mobile devices and their potential for users and journalists
- To provide an overview of social media and their potential value to journalists and journalism organizations

For many years, journalists have been criticized by some as being out of touch and isolated from their audience. Throughout the 20th century, journalists—or perhaps more accurately, journalistic organizations—were perceived to be the dominant gatekeepers, controlling what topics got discussed and what information reached viewers and listeners. In the face of an increasingly corporate and conglomerated news industry, many felt as if their voices were not heard—or worse yet, were simply ignored—by mainstream journalists. A saying, perhaps apocryphal, attributed to one of the network news anchors during the era when the broadcast television evening news was the dominant source of information for most Americans, somewhat arrogantly summed up that gatekeeper role: “The news is what *I* say it is.”

The rise of the Internet, however, has provided increased opportunities for the audience to respond to mainstream journalism and even influence and create it. The audience can also, in many cases, simply bypass the traditional gatekeepers by deciding for itself what stories it believes are most important. “Journalists can no longer view themselves as

the sage on the stage,” Emerson College journalism professor Janet Kolodzy notes. “They must step back, step down, and team up.”¹ The news process is no longer a one-way flow of information from journalist to reader, but rather a collaboration. Online journalism innovator Rob Curley is fond of demonstrating this visually with a photograph of a gate blocking a narrow road passing through a grassy field. A series of tracks on either side of the gate show that cars have simply driven around the gate. “You say you’re the gatekeeper,” Curley says. “Well, this is your gate.”*

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the basic landscape of online journalism and an examination of the structures of some online journalism organizations. It also provided some examples of how journalists, many of whom are in the process of adapting from legacy media organizations, do their work on a daily basis. This chapter examines the role of the user—the audience—in consuming *and creating* online journalism. It will do that by first looking broadly at the concept of **participatory journalism**, which encompasses a wide variety of ways the audience can take part in the journalistic process; then it turns its attention to the popularity of mobile devices, which are facilitating audience participation from remote locations; and finally it looks at the rise of social media and their attendant ability to make journalism a more collaborative process. We will see some of the ways that the audience truly can have a voice in the journalistic process, from story inception to publication and beyond. The online audience, in fact, might now say to that long-ago news anchor, “The news is what *we* say it is.”

TAG

participatory journalism

TYPES OF PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM



Of course, there has always been some role for the audience in the journalistic process, but it was usually indirect. Newspaper editors and television news producers certainly sought to give the audience what it wanted, and in that way “regular people” had some influence in what was covered and how. A journalist talking to sources as he’s developing his story also constitutes a form of audience participation. Members of the audience could also participate by writing letters to the editor or calling into radio shows as well, but these opportunities were limited and of little overall consequence.

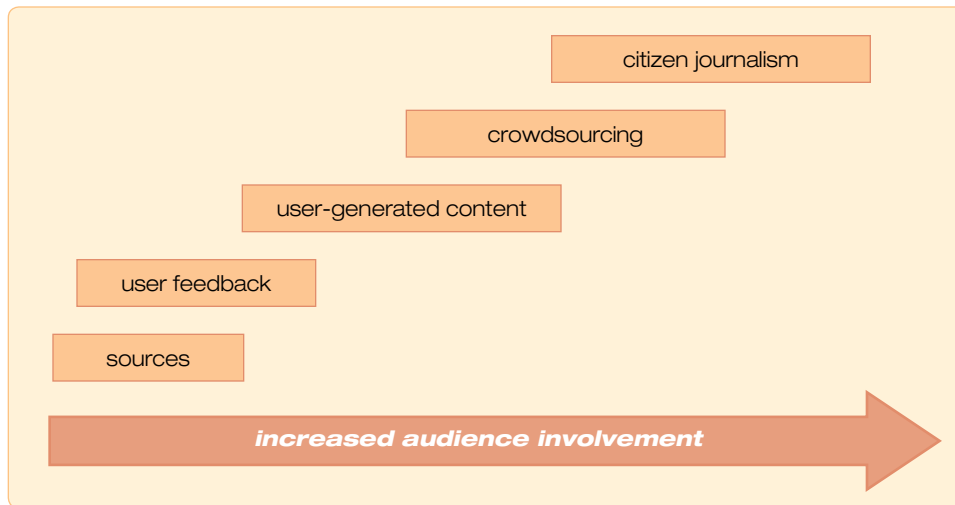
With the rise of the Internet, we are seeing significantly increased audience participation in the journalistic process in ways encompassing a broad range of audience-involvement levels. Jennifer Sizemore, vice president and editor-in-chief at [MSNBC.com](http://www.msnbc.com), says that audience participation is changing the very face of journalism. “If journalism has always been about the 5 W’s—who, what, why, where and when—then now there is a sixth W, and that W stands for ‘We,’” she says.²

At the low end of the audience-involvement spectrum we have enhanced ways for journalists to connect with members of the audience as sources; in these cases the journalist maintains the traditional status as controller and gatekeeper. At the opposite end, we have journalism that is conceived, executed and published completely by nonjournalists. Exhibit 3.1 plots the categories of user participation discussed in

A continuum of user participation.

EXHIBIT

3.1



this section—sources, user feedback, user-generated content, crowdsourcing and citizen journalism—on a continuum from journalist contribution and control to citizen contribution and control. It is important to note, however, that there is overlap in these categories and the distinctions are often not clear. For example, there is not always a clear distinction between user-generated content and crowdsourcing. Nonetheless, in this section, we will examine and attempt to distinguish between these forms of participation, beginning with sources.

Sources

“On any given story, there’s someone in the audience who knows more about it than we do,” says Public Radio International’s Michael Skoler. “Our goal should be to tap into that expertise.” Finding the right sources, of course, has always been an important part of journalism; however, the online journalist has a number of unique ways to find and use sources in stories.

Generally speaking, journalists seek two different types of sources for their stories: experts and people who have a personal or emotional connection to the story. For example, in a story about foreclosures, a journalist might seek sources such as bank officers or financial analysts who could provide technical details and expertise in framing the story. These sources would be considered experts. At the same time, the journalist might also seek people currently losing a home or in the market for a home. These sources might not be experts regarding real estate or foreclosures,

QuickLink

[Public Radio International](#)

but they would certainly be able to speak to how they have been affected. These sources, then, would have a personal connection to the story.

In addition to types of sources, we also need to consider the type of deadline the journalist is working under. Is it a breaking news situation or other type of story with a short deadline, or is it a story on which the journalist will have more time to work? In the former, the journalist will need to quickly find sources, possibly from a bank of people who have been used as sources before. In the latter, she will have greater opportunity to actually search out new sources.

In all of these situations a number of possibilities are open to the online journalist. One of the recurring criticisms of mainstream journalism is that too often journalists rely on the *same* sources over and over again—for example, whenever there is a story about auto sales they might talk to the same industry analyst, or when there is a story about media law, the same communication law professor. The techniques discussed in this section can help journalists expand their reach in locating sources so that they do not have to rely on the same sources all the time.

Social media can be an excellent way to locate sources for news stories of all types, as will be discussed later in the chapter. In addition, news organizations can create their own online communities for sources and potential sources on a number of topics. These sources can then be readily available when needed for a particular type of story. For example, Minnesota Public Radio's (MPR) Public Insight Network asks users to register as potential sources for future stories. After filling out a Web-based form with a series of basic questions including "area of interest or expertise," the user becomes a part of MPR's database of potential sources. "This is really harnessing the knowledge of the public and using it to drive and inform reporting," says Linda Fantin, director of network journalism and innovation for MPR's parent company, American Public Media. "We're trying to get away from 'the usual suspects' type of reporting and create a real connection with everyday people who have an amazing amount of knowledge and insight to share."

To date, nearly 100,000 users have signed up for MPR's Public Insight Network, and Fantin says the availability of such a diverse resource is changing the way journalists approach news-gathering. "Instead of saying, 'Hey, I need someone who's unemployed to interview in my story that's already 95 percent finished,' we say, 'You know, we have 5,000 unemployed people in our network—what do you want to know from them?'" says Fantin. "So now you can really focus on what the question is." The service is also valuable for "stress testing" information that comes from authorities—that is, making sure that what they're telling journalists stands up in the real world. "We can go out to the crowd that has insider information and knowledge and find out if the reality of the situation actually matches what the experts tell us," says Fantin.

Similarly, the Fort Myers (Fla.) *News-Press's* "Watchdog Team" is made up of a group of retired professionals, including a school principal, a corporate attorney, a police officer, a librarian and others, all with a variety of expertise. Team members help out by acting as consultants, researching data and working with reporters. The paper's "Watchdog Blog" (see Exhibit 3.2) publishes stories based on the team's work.

QuickLink

Public Insight Network

QuickLink

Watchdog Blog

The Fort Myers (Fla.) News-Press's "Watchdog Team" Web page.

EXHIBIT

3.2

Mobile | News Feeds | E-Newsletters | Text Messaging | E-Edition Find it: Jobs | Cars | Homes | Rentals | Deals | Dating | Classifieds | Place an ad

news-press.com Fort Myers, Florida • Southwest Florida

Find what you are looking for... Search

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Archives Business Crime Data/public records Elections 2010 Health Hurricane Lifestyles Moms Obituaries Oil Spill Traffic More topics

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Team Watchdog

The Watchdog Blog

Only the shadow knows: Teacher's watchful eye catches student's 'salute'

December 9th, 2010 by Sam Cook

Former Lee County School District teacher and coach John Kemmerer had a flashback after reading my Dec. 1 column about a Cypress Lake High sophomore flipping her teacher the bird behind her back after she said the teacher insulted her.

More »

Tags: local, watchdog, watchdogsam
Posted in Sam Cook | No Comments »

FBI Warns of Scam

December 7th, 2010 by Melaine Payne

Here's a press release from the FBI about a scam. In this case, the criminal already has your personal information. Now he wants you to pay him.

The Internet Crime Complaint Center has received many complaints from victims of payday loan telephone collection scams. Callers claim the victim is delinquent in a payday loan and must repay the loan to avoid legal consequences. The callers purport to be representatives of the FBI, Federal Legislative Department, various law firms, or other legitimate-sounding agencies. They claim to be collecting debts for companies such as United Cash Advance, U.S. Cash Advance, U.S. Cash Net, and other Internet check-cashing services.

According to complaints received from the public, the callers have accurate data about victims, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, employer information, bank account numbers, and the names and telephone numbers of relatives and friends. How the fraudsters obtained the personal information varies, but in some cases victims have reported they completed online applications for other loans or credit cards before the calls started.

The fraudsters relentlessly call the victims' home, cell phone, and place of employment. They refuse to provide any details about the alleged payday loans and become abusive when questioned. The callers have threatened victims with legal actions, arrests, and, in some cases, physical violence if they do not pay. In many cases, the callers harass victims' relatives, friends, and employers.

Some fraudsters have instructed victims to fax a statement agreeing to pay a certain amount, on a specific date, via a pre-paid Visa card. The statement further declares the victim will never dispute the debt.

If you receive these calls, do not follow the caller's instructions. Better to ignore.

Tip Line

Have a tip you think our team should investigate? E-mail to: watchdog@news-press.com

Contact Us

• SAM COOK
Phone: (239) 335-6364
E-mail: scook@news-press.com

• MELAINE PAYNE
Phone: (239) 244-4772
E-mail: lpayne@news-press.com

Columnists

SAM COOK
Topic: Southwest Florida issues and people

- Lee travels rough road with Posen (12/11/10)
- Student's need to learn respect (12/09/10)

MELAINE PAYNE
Topic: Consumer watchdog

- Famous faces really coming (12/13/10)
- Tell Mel: Scam has its roots in Canada (12/12/10)

Featured Databases

- Restaurant inspections
- Fort Myers City employee salaries
- Lee County salaries
- Cape Coral City employee salaries
- Fort Myers Beach employee salaries
- Sandbel employee salaries

More Databases

Latest photo galleries

- Felony arrests 12/11
- DUI Arrests 12/11
- Felony arrests 12/13
- Felony arrests 12/11
- Felony arrests 12/12
- 14-year-old accused of second degree murder

More photos

Civic Journalism

The News-Press Watchdog team is supported by our civic journalism project, which calls upon an extensive resource in our community — retired professionals with a cache of expertise. A group of volunteer citizens living in Southwest Florida serve as consultants, research data, work side-by-side with the professional reporting staff and interact with readers.

MEET THE MEMBERS

- Blog of the team members

Resources

- Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Check what's happening in court today
- Consumer Fraud Awareness, Inc.
- Dept. of Business & Professional Regulation
- Federal Trade Commission
- Florida Attorney General
- Florida First Amendment Foundation
- Florida government
- Latest consumer recalls and alerts
- Lee County Clerk of Courts
- Lee County Government
- State Office of Open Government
- International Hurricane Protection Association

Consumer Recalls

- Latest consumer recalls and alerts

WORLD TOP STORY

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For more specialized stories with longer deadlines, an organization can put out a call on its website seeking potential sources. For example, it could post something like, “If you’re in the market for a bank-owned home or have lost a home to foreclosure, we’d like to talk to you,” and provide reporter contact information. Newspapers sometimes use this same technique in the form of a printed notice, but online can be faster and more effective.

User Feedback

Websites can facilitate user involvement by allowing readers to post comments about stories. Today, nearly all online journalism sites allow users to comment on individual stories, and most organizations view this as an important way of building user identification and involvement. Users on HuffingtonPost.com, for example, post an average of 3.5 million comments per month.


This is not unlike the traditional letter to the editor of a print newspaper, but with a few important differences. First, the response to the story in question can be immediate (instead of in the next day’s paper); second, there can be *more* responses (and responses to responses); and third, the responses appear in the same place as the original story (again, unlike the temporal and physical separation of printed letters to the editor). These differences can make for a much more robust *discussion* of stories, and in fact can also involve the original reporter. For example, *The Huntsville (Ala.) Times* posted a story on its website about a new city ordinance that would require some businesses and apartment complexes to provide parking areas for bicycles. After the story was posted, several users debated the wisdom of the ordinance and wondered about the “bike racks” mentioned in the story. A user with the username pseudonym “biker-dude” asked specifically about details in the law. Reporter Steve Doyle responded by posting the actual language in the ordinance about bike racks (see Exhibit 3.3), thus answering the user’s question. In this way, journalists are increasingly realizing that a story is not necessarily “finished” once it’s written.

To be sure, there are potential problems with user commenting. Online design and usability expert Jakob Nielsen has developed a theory called “Participation Inequality,” which includes the so-called 90-9-1 rule: 90 percent of online community participants read but never contribute, 9 percent of users contribute a little and 1 percent account for most of the contributions. Most observers agree that this theory applies to online commenting as well, where a small number of posters tend to drive discussions. “I call them the online dominators,” notes NPR ombudsman Alicia Shepard. “They’re the ones who take over and often hijack conversations.” More significantly, an even smaller percentage of these commenters (perhaps 1 percent of 1 percent) become abusive, posting messages that are inappropriate, potentially libelous or threatening to the reporter, sources in the story or other users. As Shepard puts it, “there is tension between diatribe and dialogue—and guess who’s winning?”³ Journalistic organizations have responded to these kinds of problems in a number of ways, as will be discussed in Chapter 12.

Reporter Steve Doyle responds to a reader's question on *The Huntsville Times* website.


EXHIBIT

3.3

 **bikerdude** August 27, 2010 at 9:13AM
Follow

Hey Steve Doyle - can you post a link that gives the details of the new law? Mostly I'm wondering about the specs on the racks. Do they have to be metal? Can they just sink 4x4s into the ground with a metal ring bolted to it for attaching a lock? Does it have to be a "rack" or can it be a chain strung up between two poles that a lock can attach to? How much space is required per bike? Info. We need info.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#) [Inappropriate? Alert us.](#)

 **Steve Doyle, The Huntsville Times** August 27, 2010 at 9:47AM
Follow

bikerdude ~

Here's what the ordinance says about bicycle racks: "The bicycle rack must support the bicycle frame in two places and enable the frame and one or both wheels of the bicycle to be secured. The bicycle must be able to be securely held with its frame supported in an upright position so that the bicycle cannot be pushed or fall in a manner that will damage the wheels or components of the bicycle. Bicycle racks that support the bicycle by the wheel only are not permitted."

"The bicycle rack must be able to accommodate high-security U-shaped bicycle locks."

"The bicycle rack shall have a durable finish that will protect the rack and the bicycle."

Also, bike parking spaces have to be a minimum of 2 feet wide by six feet long with an access aisle of at least 5 feet and vertical clearance of at least 7 feet. Racks must be "securely anchored to the ground or the building structure to prevent the racks from being removed from the location."

[Reply](#) [Post new](#) [Inappropriate? Alert us.](#)

User-Generated Content

In literal terms, user-generated content (UGC) is anything contributed by a user to a journalistic site. So, we could consider contributions to a story from a source or a comment on a story to be user-generated content. However, for our purposes here we will distinguish true user-generated content as a *substantive* contribution of media to a given journalistic story.

Most often, user-generated content is contributed after a specific call. For example, a local TV station's website may ask users to contribute pictures of damage from a recent storm or video of pets doing funny things. The "iReport" section of CNN's website encourages users to send in general videos or videos responding to specific topics, such as "Are Wildfires Affecting You?" and "High-Mileage Hybrid Car Stories." The contributed videos are then posted to the CNN website and at times shown on the cable network as well.

In 2009, *The New York Times* website asked users to contribute photos illustrating the effects of the recession. It then organized the submissions according to topic ("Business," "Family," "Sacrifice" and so forth). The paper received thousands of submissions and posted hundreds on its site, including everything from abandoned

QuickLink

[iReport](#)

QuickLink

[NYT's Recession Photos](#)

gas stations and banks to a laid-off worker's tool kit to a sign in a department store window that read "Silly Silly Prices in Store Now." It was a demonstration of a breadth of reporting—both geographically and by topic—that would be impossible using only the paper's staff.

QuickLink

Pictory Mag

Some sites are made up entirely of content submitted by users and edited by professional journalists. For example, PictoryMag.com (see Exhibit 3.4) features photos submitted by users presented in large format with captions on a black background. The site's creator, Laura Brunow Miner, puts out calls periodically for submissions on a particular topic, then chooses photos from among submitted photographs and captions to include in the showcase. Miner edits the captions and also writes introductions to the showcases. (One showcase was titled "The Lone Star state beyond the stereotypes. Except for the really charming ones. Everything's Bigger in Texas.")

Miner and other journalists who work with user-generated content agree that one of the most important keys to getting good submissions is crafting a good call, what Twitter's Robin Sloan calls "the fine art of the prompt." A call that is too vague and general, such as "tell us what you think," won't work as well as what Sloan calls "universal particulars"—something specific for which just about anyone might have a contribution. One of Miner's favorite examples is "The one that got away: stories of lost love." The idea is to give potential submitters enough information to provide context and yet still allow for unexpected results. For example, a call for a future showcase on PictoryMag.com reads: "Handmade: The art of personal craftsmanship is not dead. Show us an inanimate object that you or someone you know made and tell us about it."⁴

Sometimes, a site can capitalize on subjects that people are *already* talking about on social media sites. Miner regularly scours sites such as Flickr for topics on which people are already submitting photos; Sloan calls these journeys "meme safaris." "There's all kinds of really cool stuff that people are doing on the Internet already and we're just not converting it to editorial yet," says Miner.

For user-generated content to be effective, journalists have to go beyond just asking and waiting. It requires "finesse, hard work and respect for your submitters," says Sloan. In fact, some think that the term "user-generated content" gives short shrift to the potential value of the form, evoking thoughts of simply "free content" or "factory farming." Instead, Sloan and others prefer the term "community editorial." Miner agrees, saying community editorial "shows the relationship and the respect and the hard work that goes into it."

Crowdsourcing

In crowdsourcing, sometimes called **distributed reporting**, members of the audience are harnessed in a more organized way to cover a particular story. The crowd can be geographically dispersed (such as users in different areas of the city reporting on potholes) or can simply divide up a workload (such as users reviewing the

PictoryMag.com features user-contributed pictures and captions.

EXHIBIT

3.4

Pictory Your best photo stories.

NOTE TO SELF
End of the year reflections on the moments that have shaped our lives.
[VIEW SHOWCASE ▶](#)

Other recent features

[VIEW ALL ▶](#)

Check out the new Pictory Blog
on Tumblr

Editor's favorite features

LONDON Fall in love with picturesque London, from the eyes of visitors and veterans. [Browse photos by Chris Carroll](#)

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Courtesy of Pictorymag.com.

details of the state budget to find possible improprieties). Crowdsourcing can work for either event-driven stories (such as elections) or for stories that develop over a longer period of time (such as determining the number and location of abandoned houses in the city). In some cases, crowdsourcing takes a form that is something like coordinated user-generated content, such as *The New York Times* recession pictures discussed earlier.

Wikis, collaborative sites that contain linked information about a particular topic, are another example of crowdsourcing. Wikipedia.org is the largest and best-known wiki, containing more than 3 million articles on various topics in English alone. The organization behind Wikipedia has also established Wikinews.com, a site to encourage collaborative, wiki-based journalism (see Exhibit 3.5). Some articles are produced by Wikinews itself, whereas others are contributed and edited collaboratively by users.

EXHIBIT

3.5

Wikinews page for Space Shuttle *Endeavour* final mission.

The screenshot shows the Wikinews website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Article', 'Collaboration', 'Opinions', 'Read', 'Edit', 'View history', and a search box. Below this, a banner encourages users to write an article. The main article is titled 'Space Shuttle *Endeavour* enters history books after nineteen years following penultimate landing of program', dated Saturday, June 4, 2011. The article text describes the shuttle's final mission, STS-134, and mentions the commander Mark Kelly. An official photo of the crew is included. To the right, there's a 'Space' sidebar with 'Related stories' and a list of recent events. At the bottom left, there's a 'HAVE YOUR SAY' section for comments.

Wikinews

Don't forget, Wikinews is written by people like you! If you find a topic you want to see Wikinews cover, why not create an account and write an article on it?

Space Shuttle *Endeavour* enters history books after nineteen years following penultimate landing of program

Saturday, June 4, 2011

Space Shuttle *Endeavour* landed for the final time at 2:34 a.m. EDT (0634 UTC) at Cape Canaveral, Florida, U.S. Wednesday, marking the end of its nineteen-year operational career. The mission, STS-134, is the penultimate of the NASA Space Shuttle program; *Atlantis* is scheduled to fly the final mission in July.

The commander of the mission, Mark Kelly, paid tribute to the spaceship shortly after touchdown, saying, "It's sad to see her land for the last time, but she really has a great legacy." *Endeavour* launched earlier this month on a mission to carry the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) and several spare parts to the International Space Station (ISS). The AMS will enable scientists to examine cosmic rays and learn more about the history of the universe.

The six-member crew of STS-134 consists of commander Mark Kelly, pilot Greg Johnson, and mission specialists Michael Fincke, Roberto Vittori, Andrew Feustel, and Gregory Chamitoff. European Space Agency's Vittori is scheduled to be the last non-American to fly aboard the Shuttle.

Kelly is the husband of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who was wounded during a January shooting in Tucson, Arizona. Giffords watched the launch from the Kennedy Space Center on May 16, but was asleep in a hospital during the early morning landing, according to Kelly.

The end of the shuttle program comes after NASA opted to phase out the aging fleet, which has been in use since 1981, due to financial problems with maintaining the crafts. According to BBC News Online, NASA thinks that allowing private businesses to win space transportation contracts will generate enough revenue to pay for sending astronauts to and from the International Space Station.

In a statement, NASA Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr., said, "We are very proud of *Endeavour's* legacy, and this penultimate flight of the space shuttle program once again demonstrated the amazing skill and dedication of our astronauts and the entire workforce." He stated that as NASA "begin[s] the transition from the shuttle program to the commercial transportation of [its] crews and cargo, [its] ability to tackle big challenges remains steadfast and will ensure

Official photo of *Endeavour's* final crew, taken in January 2010.
Image: NASA / Robert Markowitz

Have your say

Is ending the Space Shuttle program a good decision in the long term?

Add or view comments

Space

Related stories

- 4 June 2011: Space Shuttle *Endeavour* enters history books after nineteen years following penultimate landing of program
- 4 June 2011: Mars Opportunity rover passes distance milestone
- 25 May 2011: Expedition 27 crew successfully returns to Earth
- 22 May 2011: Pope speaks with astronauts in orbit for first time
- 18 May 2011: Space Shuttle *Endeavour* launches for final time

More information on Space:

- Outer space
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From Wikipedia.org. Reprinted with permission.

Crowdsourcing tends to work best on stories that are quite specific and for which instructions can be clearly given and followed. One of the largest journalism crowdsourcing projects was undertaken by the *Guardian* newspaper of London after a scandal over the expenses of members of Parliament (MPs). The *Guardian*'s cross-town rival, *The Telegraph*, had initially broken the story, which reported that MPs had been using public funds to purchase second homes and other luxury items. In response, the *Guardian* posted nearly a half-million pages of receipts, expense reports and other documents on its site and then asked users to pore through them looking for suspicious expenses. To stimulate interest, the *Guardian* provided an overall progress meter on its front page and embedded gamelike elements into the site interface. The site even provided a "scoreboard" of the top user contributors (see Exhibit 3.6). More than 27,000 users participated in the project, providing the *Guardian* with a number of stories that probably would have been impossible to uncover using conventional reporting.

QuickLink

[The Guardian's
MP Expenses](#)

Citizen Journalism

Taking user involvement to an even higher level, citizen journalism—also called professional-amateur or **pro-am journalism**—has nonjournalists playing the predominant role in the creation of journalistic content. As with much online, there are varying degrees of citizen journalism and various models for making it work. There

The *Guardian*'s crowdsourcing project for MP expenses list of top users.

EXHIBIT

3.6

Investigate your MP's expenses

Top users by line items added

eatmypoverty	11,025 line items
gdw	6,773 line items
pedromorgan	1,709 line items
norepeat	763 line items
sjhodgson	655 line items
orange	617 line items
NormanStevens	612 line items
rachaelov	490 line items
maud	479 line items
biggles	457 line items
mtp34	385 line items
mt	367 line items
anon-16436	335 line items
BlackSand	329 line items
anon-17732	324 line items
Dogfast	316 line items

is also disagreement and, in some cases, confusion, over just what constitutes citizen journalism and how it should be used—or whether it should be used at all.

One model for citizen journalism is often referred to as **open-source journalism**, a reference to open-source software, which is collectively written by various public programmers. Here, a professional journalist may begin the story or act as a facilitator and then bring citizens into the process at various levels. Citizen involvement might involve consulting or recommending sources to interview, reading story drafts or actively doing reporting work. Or, an editor or other professional journalist could assign stories to citizen reporters and then guide them through the process and edit their content. That is how the process works at sites such as The Forum at forumhome.org, a nonprofit hyperlocal site serving a number of small communities in southeastern New Hampshire (see Exhibit 3.7). A managing editor oversees the operation, and a handful of other editors work to train and collaborate with citizen journalists.

QuickLink

The Forum

EXHIBIT

3.7

The Forum website is largely composed of content from citizen journalists.

The Forum
Serving the Towns in the Shadow of Portsmouth
Lancaster - Deerfield
Northwood - Nottingham

The Forum - P.O. Box 476 - Deerfield NH - 03037 - Contact us at news@forumhome.org - Free Subscription

Jan 07, 2011

News
• Hot off the Presses
• Prior Headlines
• Front Page
• Candia
• Deerfield
• Northwood
• Nottingham
• Obituaries
• "Y" for Youth
• Weather Watch

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• Opinions/LTE
• Picks & Opinions
• Poll Results

Features
• Arts & Entertainment
• Sports
• Home & Health
• Outdoors
• Religion

Sections
• Events and Activities
• Useful Links
• Post Free Classified
• View Classifieds
• New Hampshire Ebay
• NH Web Cams

facebook
The Forum

Note that to protect email addresses from spammers, any addresses appearing in The Forum will be modified to change the "O" sign to "AT". If you want to use that email address, please change "AT" back to "O".

The 2010 Governor's Awards for Pollution Prevention
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
• Sat, January 08, 2011

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services announced on January 6, Fujifilm Dimatix Inc. in Lebanon and Wire Belt Company of America in Londonderry are winners of the 2010 Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention that recognizes outstanding pollution prevention practices in businesses and organizations. Governor Lynch and DES Commissioner Tom Burack will present the award to both companies on January 10, 2011 in the Governor and Council Chambers in Concord.

Dimatix received this award for making innovative process changes to eliminate hazardous wastes and reduce energy consumption. The company was able to eliminate over 2,100 gallons/year of hazardous waste and save over 1 million kilowatt hours of electricity, which is the equivalent of eliminating 792 tons of power plant emissions per year.

Wire Belt received this award for its energy reduction projects. Environmental Management System, and its work with the Department of Environmental Services Spring Leadership Initiative. Through its effort that included installation of a 100 kilowatt solar photovoltaic array, it saved over 800,000kwh, which is equal to the elimination of 533 tons of power plant air emissions. Wire Belt also implemented a waste reduction program that resulted in an annual reduction of 191,000 pounds of solid waste and 237,000 pounds of raw material. (more)

Comparing Our Four Communities Part Two: Where Do We Get Our Revenue?
Walter Hooker
• Sat, January 08, 2011

In Part One of the financial comparison of our four communities, the author discussed appropriations, or how funds were spent in 2010. In Part Two the author will look at the sources of revenue. To see the spreadsheet comparing revenue for the four towns for both the town and school, click on the specific headings below.

Town Revenues (MS-4)

The more revenue a town or school district takes in, the less it has to raise from property tax. The 38 DRA revenue lines are summarized into seven major areas.

This Week's Poll
I finished most of my holiday gift-shopping:
☐ Sometime before Halloween
☐ Before Thanksgiving
☐ On Black Friday day after Thanksgiving
☐ On Cyber Monday (Monday after Thanksgiving)
☐ Before Christmas Eve
☐ On Christmas Eve
☐ Did not finish before the Holidays

From www.forumhome.org. Used by permission.

There are those who are skeptical of citizen journalism, at least as it has been practiced thus far. Like so many Internet terms, citizen journalism, for some, has become the kind of buzzword that sometimes overstates its impact. Nicholas Lehmann, dean of Columbia University's Journalism School, wrote a *New Yorker* article that was very critical of the citizen journalism movement. He states,

[W]hen one reads [citizen journalism], after having been exposed to the buildup, it is nearly impossible not to think, *This* is what all the fuss is about? [T]he content of most citizen journalism will be familiar to anyone who has read a church or community newsletter—it's heartwarming and probably adds to the store of good things in the world, but it does not mount the collective challenge to power which the traditional media are supposedly too timid to take up.⁵

Computer columnist John C. Dvorak is a bit more succinct. "Citizen journalism is like citizen professional baseball," he contends. "You can't play pro baseball just because you think the Seattle Mariners stink."⁶

But such criticisms give short shrift to the inherent potential for citizen journalists working in concert with professional journalists and editors. "We can help the new journalists understand and value ethics, the importance of serving the public trust, and professionalism," says journalist Dan Gillmour. "We can't, and shouldn't, keep them out."⁷ Also, it is worth noting that blogs, as discussed in Chapter 2, are another form that allows audience participation in the journalistic conversation.

MOBILE DEVICES

Just as the development of the Internet was the last great journalistic revolution of the 20th century, it is likely that mobile devices will be the first great revolution of the 21st century. In the United States, more than 80 percent of adults now have a mobile phone and—more importantly to journalists—approximately 40 percent have a mobile phone that can also access the Internet. *Even more* importantly to us, smartphones outsell conventional mobile phones and even PCs. In fact, given the explosive growth of smartphones such as the iPhone and Android models, some analysts say that 80 percent of Americans may have smartphones by the end of 2012.⁸

These developments are leading to a sea of change in the way people access the Internet, and specifically how they access their news and information. "It seems America is getting hooked on the smartphone," writes CNN's John D. Sutter. "We depend on these modern Swiss Army knives for everything from planning our schedules to checking the news, finding entertainment and managing our social networks. [Users] say they can't live without their phones and the always-connected lifestyle they promote."⁹ With that "can't live without" mentality in mind, this section provides an overview of mobile technology and how it is helping facilitate a more portable and participatory journalism experience for users.

TAG

mobile + GPS

Types of Mobile Devices

The smartphone is, of course, the 800-pound gorilla of mobile devices, combining the capabilities of phones, music and video players, navigation systems, the personal digital assistants of the early 2000s and even laptop computers. It is little wonder they have been so quickly embraced! Smartphones have the additional advantage over pedestrian Internet-capable phones of being able to run applications, which—as will be discussed later in this section—turns the handheld mobile into a richer information experience. Nearly every mobile phone in use today—smartphone or not—also has the ability to use **short messaging service (SMS)**, which allows the transmittal and receipt of up to 160 characters of text. (You probably know SMS as texting.) Most phones also support **multimedia messaging service (MMS)**, which allows for sending and receiving photographs and other media.

Beyond handheld devices, so-called “netbooks”—small laptop computers with Internet connectivity but limited computing power—have also grown in popularity. Tablet computers have followed, with Apple’s iPad leading the way. Tablets are attractive because they combine a large screen size with a measure of portability not available with laptops or netbooks.

Finally, in-car mobile devices are gaining popularity as well. Although concerns exist over providing Internet access to drivers in a moving car, there is little doubt that the cars of the future will be Internet-connected. For example, Ford equips a number of its models with the MyFord Touch system (see Exhibit 3.8), which provides a voice-command interface, Bluetooth connectivity with mobile phones and MP3 players and—when the car’s gearshift is in park—Internet access.

EXHIBIT

3.8

The MyFord Touch system features Internet access.



Photo at right courtesy Ford Motor Company.

Mobile Advantages

The mobile device's first advantage is that it is . . . *mobile*—it can go anywhere and it is small enough that people can and will take it anywhere. And, because the phone is always on and always connected, it provides a channel for reaching users instantly, anytime, anywhere. Tomi T. Ahonen, a consultant who studies mobile trends, says people carry mobile devices so that they are always connected:

We carry our phone because we know instinctively that something may happen, and we need to be “able to be reached.” Maybe there is an emergency, maybe a change to plans, etc. And only a phone can “ring in our pocket.” The laptop cannot wake up from its sleep mode, and suddenly warn us, that there is someone on Skype who wants to talk to us urgently. That urgent email cannot reach our notebook or netbook PC if we are not in WiFi coverage. But the call or the SMS message will reach our pocket every time, almost anywhere on the planet.

Ahonen also points out that hard-core mobile phone enthusiasts check their devices more than 100 times a day, and that for many (like Ahonen) “the mobile is the last thing we see before we fall asleep, and it’s the first thing we see when we wake up.”¹⁰

The smartphone’s “always connected” status, capability for instant two-way communication and multimedia capabilities also make it perfect for expanding participatory journalism. You can imagine how an audience full of smartphone users would enhance the participatory journalism stories discussed in the previous section. With a smartphone, a user can literally snap a picture and send it to a media organization along with a short message in a matter of seconds. Contrast that with the laptop and camera you may be carrying in your backpack—to do the same thing you would need to turn on the camera, take the picture, boot up the laptop, log into your wireless service, transfer the photo to the laptop, *then* send it. It would likely take several minutes to accomplish the same thing a smartphone can do in seconds. This is why an increasing number of news organizations are equipping their reporters with smartphones that can gather video, audio and still photos quickly and efficiently.

At the same time, the smartphone also interfaces with social media, which is discussed in the next section of this chapter. Not only can people stay connected to news content, they can also stay connected on their social networks as well using mobile devices.

Online Journalism for Mobile Devices

Given these advantages and the speed and passion with which consumers have embraced mobile devices, online journalism organizations are rushing to provide content for users on the go. This includes establishing websites designed for mobile devices, developing mobile apps, using SMS to send out headlines and updates, and using geolocation services to tailor content to a user’s particular location. While he

was editor of *The Gazette* and GazetteOnline in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Steve Buttry developed what he called a “mobile first” strategy:

Reporters, editors and visual journalists need to think first about how to package and deliver news for mobile devices. Information technology staffs need to work first on development of mobile applications for popular devices. Sales staffs need to make it a top priority to guide business customers in using our mobile apps and platforms to reach customers with advertising and direct-sales opportunities. Designers need to present content that is clear and easy to read on the small screen (even if this means spending less staff resources on design of print or Web products). Executives need to redirect resources and set priorities so that we pursue mobile opportunities as aggressively as we pursue the most important news stories in our communities.¹¹

Buttry’s innovative ideas about community engagement and “mobile first” strategy earned him *Editor & Publisher’s* 2010 “Editor of the Year” award. He cites studies that predict mobile advertising will reach \$11 billion by 2014 and says “it’s a huge opportunity that we’re going to go after.”

It’s clear the mobile audience is becoming more important, and content needs to be adapted for them. “Two or three years ago, mobile was just another way of getting content—it was seen as just a device or a platform,” says *The Washington Post* managing editor Raju Narisetti. “But now mobile is increasingly becoming front and center and a part of our core strategy, because more and more people are consuming their content on mobile. For a lot of our readers, their first exposure to *The Washington Post* brand in the morning is their mobiles, so we have to start thinking differently for them.” Vivian Schiller, former president and CEO of National Public Radio, agreed. “It is critical for us to be where the audience seems to be going,” she says, “and the key is going to be making sure the experience matches the form factor.”¹²


The fundamental platform difference for mobile—at least smartphones—is the smaller screen size. This means, of course, that less information can fit on the screen. Users of smartphones also see the user experience as more interactive—they tend to hold phones close to them and are used to continually touching the screen to make things happen. Consequently, content designed for the full-size computer screen can’t effectively transfer in its entirety to mobile. “People aren’t going to scroll through 35 or 36 screens of content,” notes Narisetti. Thus, mobile content—so far at least—tends to be a scaled-back version of Web content. This will no doubt change with increased adoption of full-screen devices such as the iPad, but it seems unlikely these devices will achieve the penetration levels of smartphones, at least in the foreseeable future. Thus, journalistic organizations will have to tailor content separately to small devices like smartphones and larger devices like iPads. “The iPad is *not* just a big iPhone,” notes Schiller. “The way people use the iPad versus the iPhone is completely different and just demands a different user experience.” So, just as legacy media organizations had to learn that shovelware content from other

media did not translate well online, now they must adapt—and not just transfer—content designed for the full-size computer screen to mobile devices.

The real value of mobile is not necessarily its ability to display long-form text content or video, but rather its ability to communicate short bursts of up-to-the-second information, such as updates on a hazardous waste spill, a developing weather situation or a sporting event—information that can be tailored to a user based on his or her location. Thus, the user in the south end of town may receive a special alert about a traffic jam in the area or a large fire. Buttry says that journalism organizations can even partner with local businesses to connect with customers using mobile technology. So, if a user is in a particular area and gets a flat tire, for example, the news site can be the conduit for providing information about nearby businesses (advertisers) that can fix it. “Helping local businesses serve that growing mobile audience may be the most urgent opportunity that local media companies face today,” he says.¹³

Although most mobile communication may start with the SMS-style bursts of data, the mobile user also has access to more complete information, such as full stories, as well. The text bursts can be linked to allow the user to read more and experience different types of content if she wishes (even though much of this type of longer-form content is probably more comfortably consumed in a traditional full-size screen experience). What mobile offers the online journalism organization is a direct line to (and from) the audience—anytime, anywhere.

SOCIAL MEDIA

 Social media were one of the technologies that arose from the so-called “Web 2.0” movement of the early 2000s. The idea of Web 2.0 was that the Internet would become more user-centered, based on virtual communities and user-generated content. In addition to social media, Web 2.0 also brought technologies such as podcasting, blogs and RSS feeds to the Internet. Social media (often referred to as social networks) are sites designed to allow small-scale or large-scale social interaction among groups of friends or professionals. The interaction can include messaging, chat, collaboration and the sharing of links and media. There are a broad range of social media types, including media-sharing sites such as Flickr and Picasa, bookmarking sites and wikis, many of which are discussed in other parts of this book. For our purposes here, we are concerned with the social media sites whose main purpose is to allow communication among individuals and groups.

Within the communications-centric social media, there are also a number of subcategories, each including a number of sites of varying popularity. For journalists, the social networking site Facebook, the microblogging site Twitter and the location-based social networking site foursquare are currently the most widely used sites. However, rather than addressing here specific social media sites and how they work (it is likely you are already familiar with them, and if not you can become fluent relatively easily and quickly), we will concentrate more generally on how these sites can be used for journalism.

TAGsocial media

Online Journalism and Social Media

At first, you might wonder why online journalism organizations would be interested in the relatively simplistic capabilities of social media. After all, most media organizations have the ability to create much more sophisticated pages and content on their own websites. The answer is simple: Online journalism organizations want to be involved in social media because that's where the people are. Social media sites have become an integral part of daily life for millions of people (and the number is growing), and online journalism sites want to be a part of it.

There are three main ways that journalism organizations can use social media: (1) as a publicity tool to promote stories and other content; (2) as a user-comment and feedback tool to foster audience involvement; and (3) as a reporting source. Although a large number of news organizations have embraced the first use, the second and third uses are not as common. “We have only begun to scratch the surface of social media as a powerful tool for journalism,” says Schiller. “What we’re missing is the use of social media as a platform for engagement and as a platform for news gathering.”¹⁴

Although journalistic involvement with social media—as with so much else in online journalism—is a work in progress, let’s take a look at some of the ways journalism organizations are embracing these uses of social media.

Promoting content

Because people spend so much time with social media and tend to interact with it throughout the day (and night), it is obviously a very effective way to promote content. Most news organizations now have at least some presence on popular social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and it is relatively simple to promote both breaking news and feature stories. If headlines and summaries have been written effectively (as discussed in Chapter 8), they can be cut and pasted as tweets or status updates. Michigan’s AnnArbor.com regularly posts status updates featuring its stories on Facebook, as shown in Exhibit 3.9. Below the brief text of the status update, the story’s headline and lead sentence are shown. The Facebook follower can simply click the link to go to the site’s story page and post a comment about the story either on the page itself or on Facebook.

Breaking news stories, of course, can be updated on social media sites as the stories themselves are updated. For feature or other “static” stories, only one notice should be posted so that users don’t become annoyed and decide to stop “following” the news site. However, many sites apportion their story notices throughout the day to give followers something new to look at on the site each time they log onto their social media site.

“It’s a basic philosophical shift in saying that our job is to get our content read by the most number of people,” says the *Post*’s Narisetti. “Part of journalism today is making sure your story reaches the most people, and most of what we’re doing [with social media] is simply aimed at getting more people to read our stories.” To

QuickLink

AnnArbor.com
on Facebook

A story link posted by AnnArbor.com on Facebook.

EXHIBIT

3.9



that end, the *Post* has partnered with Facebook and Twitter to include a “Network News” box on its pages. As shown in Exhibit 3.10, Network News displays *Post* stories recommended by your Facebook friends (assuming you are currently logged on to your Facebook account) and also displays tweets about *Post* stories.

Audience involvement

At a more advanced level, social media can also be used to foster audience involvement, promote conversation and provide a method of audience feedback. “I think a lot of people make the mistake of just using social media as a news feed, but what we’re using social media for—and I know it’s a buzzword, but—we’re really trying to engage with people on many levels,” says Katharine Zaleski, *The Washington Post*’s executive producer and head of digital news products.

The Washington Post’s Network News widget.

EXHIBIT

3.10



This engagement can be as simple as inviting users to comment through social media. As shown Exhibit 3.11, two consecutive Facebook postings from the Evansville (Ind.) *Courier & Press* seek audience action. The first promotes a story on the paper's site about Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg being named *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year" and asks, "Do you agree with this choice, FB friends? If you disagree, who would you have chosen?" In the posting immediately below it, the site urges users to "like" a sponsor's profile for a chance to win an iPad.

EXHIBIT

3.11

Postings on the Evansville (Ind.) *Courier & Press* Facebook page demonstrate efforts to increase audience involvement.



Evansville Courier & Press

Time magazine has named Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg as its 2010 Person of the Year. Do you agree with this choice, FB friends? If you disagree, who would you have chosen?



Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg named Time 'Person of Year'

www.courierpress.com

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been named Time's "Person of the Year" for 2010, joining the ranks of winners that include heads of state and rock stars as the person the magazine believes most influenced events of the past year.

Yesterday at 12:44pm · Share

9 people like this.

View all 7 comments



Derek Flahardy I'm the person of the year, just deAl with it, best carpet deAner in the frigging world

Yesterday at 2:55pm · Flag



Travis Goodman @Kevin if you don't think Facebook has made an impact, then you are clearly delusional. I'm a Facebook vet, I've had one since it was opened to only college students with an active college email account and if you didn't have a college ema...

See More

Yesterday at 3:21pm · 1 person · Flag



Evansville Courier & Press

Our friends at Half Off Depot are giving away an iPad when they get to 1,000 "likes" — they're at 966 now. Click the link and help them get to the magical mark!



Half Off Depot Evansville

Page: 1,105 people like this.

Yesterday at 11:21am · Share

51 people like this.

Social media engagement can also take on more interactive forms, as illustrated by conversations between media organizations and users. “Community engagement through social media is vital to us moving forward,” says Christoph Trappe, supervisor of digital and community news with Gazette Communications. “We need to lead conversations, and let people have conversations with us.” Similarly, Zaleski says the *Post*’s social media staff “have really made an effort to be incredibly conversational and respond to everybody and re-tweet random people that add good things to our content. It’s about engaging people and being there when they respond,” she says. “It used to be that we tell you what you should read,” says Narisetti. “But with all the new technology that the audience has it’s more like a two-way conversation. The journalist is no longer a gatekeeper but a gate-opener.”

Mandy Jenkins, who held social media positions with *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and TBD.com (discussed later in this chapter), agrees that there is much more to social media than just promoting content. She says social media should be used to identify and cultivate sources for stories and also to respond to users’ concerns, engaging people who feel passionate about the site, “the people who are giving us tips, the people who *could* be giving us tips in the future but right now think something we’re doing sucks.” She says sites should try to respond to every question and criticism that emanates from users. “I really think [social media] is a good place to be addressing your critics and addressing your fans as well—and trying to turn your critics into your fans.”¹⁵

Reporting

Social media can also be a resource for reporting news. As discussed previously in this chapter, crowdsourcing and citizen journalism projects can involve the audience in the reporting process, and this involvement can often be fostered through social media. For example, Wendy Norris, an investigative reporter for the site [RH Reality Check](#), wanted to find out whether condoms were kept in the open or locked up behind the counter at pharmacies in Colorado. The idea of the story was to learn whether rumors that locked-up condoms were depressing sales to young people were true. With a simple tweet, shown in Exhibit 3.12, she was able to recruit 17 volunteers across the state who visited 64 different stores. The results of the search were shown in an interactive Google map (see Exhibit 3.12(b)). In the end, she found that condoms were not locked up, at least in the stores her social media reporters visited.

News organizations can also find user-generated content by searching sites such as Facebook, as well as the media-sharing sites Flickr and YouTube. “We have people on staff now whose jobs are to basically go out into social streams and bring back user-generated content, [which is] generated off of different articles we write,” says Zaleski. Even for traditional journalist-reported stories, social media sites can be a good source for finding people to interview for stories. By putting out a general call, as shown in Exhibit 3.12, or searching for specific areas of interest (see Chapter

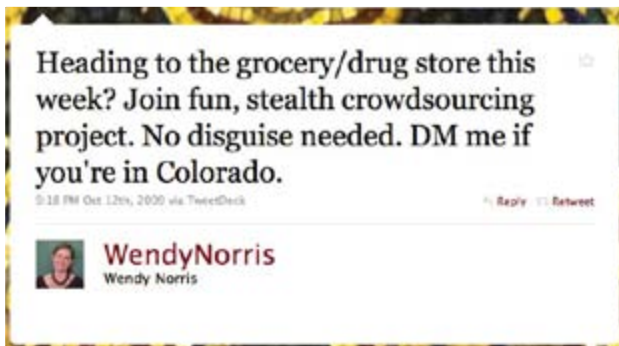
TAG

[online reporting sources](#)

EXHIBIT

3.12

With a single tweet (a), reporter Wendy Norris was able to recruit volunteers for a crowdsourcing project (b).



(a)



(b)

6 for sites that can be used to search social media), reporters can often locate sources through social media profiles.

Finally, social media sites like Twitter can be indispensable tools when breaking news happens. When a small plane crashed into a building in Austin in 2010, the *Austin American-Statesman* and other local media used Twitter and Facebook to cover the story. Ryan O’Keefe, Web producer at the local Fox TV station, posted a tweet asking for feedback when he first heard of the crash on his police scanner, and an *American-Statesman* reporter tweeted his phone number so witnesses could call him directly. Social media content from users—witnesses, concerned family members and others—was used throughout the coverage of the breaking story.

Although it lasted only about six months, Washington, D.C.’s TBD.com may have presaged many of the ways social media will one day be integrated into mainstream journalism. The site was owned by Allbritton Communications Company, which also owns a broadcast television station and a cable channel in Washington and had started the successful political site Politico.com. By the time it launched in August 2010, TBD.com had assembled a veritable who’s who of journalistic, social media and mobile innovators, including former *Washington Post* managing editor Jim Brady, Steve Buttry, and Mandy Jenkins. Plans called for a staff of approximately 50 people, including a seven-member “community engagement team.” TBD.com pledged a policy of covering breaking news with an emphasis on using social media:

TBD will never be a finished product. On the web, on mobile devices and on our 24-hour cable news channel, we’ll always be in motion: constantly updating, improving and evolving; seeking more details, reaction or community conversation. We’ll be a place you visit to watch the news unfold in real time. . . . We’ll be honest with our community about what we know and what we don’t know. We’ll

tell you what questions we're still pursuing and tell you how you can help us find the answers.¹⁶

TBD's operation received its first big test barely a month after its launch when an armed man took hostages at the Discovery Channel's suburban Washington, D.C., headquarters. In addition to posting continual updates on the site's home page, TBD used social media, especially Twitter, to follow the story. "Mandy [Jenkins] was right at the heart of our coverage," said Buttry. "She was connecting with people, conversing and verifying [via social media] and collecting it into a story form." Jenkins herself later shared more insight on her blog:

Within minutes we were getting in photos and eyewitness reports from Twitter. We were streaming video online before anyone else—heck, it was even used on other news sites in our area. As things were confirmed, I was able to tweet them out ASAP. I had a lot of back-and-forth communication going on with our staff, some of our blogger partners on-scene and other eyewitnesses on Twitter (a few we even got to talk live on-air). In short, it was an amazing time to be behind the Tweetdeck [a program used to keep track of Twitter posts].

We sent 21 tweets on the situation that day. According to the Bivings Report, we were mentioned/re-tweeted 334 times. We got more than 400 new followers, a boost in web traffic—and a lot of wonderful praise from our audience and peers.¹⁷

But there were signs of trouble within a short time of TBD.com's launch. Less than three months after the site went live, Brady announced his resignation, saying that he and CEO Robert Allbritton "had some—I would say minor—disagreements, but on many issues."¹⁸ Then, in February 2011, Allbritton announced that the company's broadcast station, WJLA-TV, would be taking over the site, which would now become focused on arts and entertainment. All but a few of TBD.com's employees were laid off. Although WJLA's general manager called the reorganization a "mid-course correction" and said that TBD.com would have "its own staff, its own reporters and its own content," the site's original mission had clearly been abandoned.¹⁹

However, many think TBD.com's failure says less about the future of mobile, social media and geolocation than it does about the particular dynamics within the Allbritton organization and the possible issues of legacy vs. new media. Brady told Poynter.com's Scott Libin that TBD.com's demise could be traced to Allbritton's unwillingness to take sufficient risks and break away from legacy media processes:

"It's hard to build something very different in the shadow of a legacy brand," he says. "Right from the start it was sort of us versus them. . . . Whether the existing business is print or broadcast, Brady believes, "if there's a huge revenue stream that's dying off a little bit, there's the sense that you need all hands on deck to preserve that," and the risk tolerance that's vital to innovation—"a certain freedom of thinking," he calls it—can quickly be extinguished."²⁰

Other observers agreed with Brady's assessment. Web journalism consultant Rick Robinson said TBD.com was hamstrung by its legacy media bosses:

In fact it seems a mid-course correction after six months implies almost by definition the misunderstanding of what TBD should have been: an Internet startup. And to be treated like a Web startup: giving its people room to make crazy mistakes while scratching and clawing out from under a century of established methods to find its own way. Getting all wrapped up in the multimedia recirculation of traffic among old and new worlds so early was likely a mistake, at least it was without first schooling or removing the old-heads at Allbritton.²¹

Steve Buttry agrees that TBD.com was not given sufficient opportunity to develop. "TBD.com has not failed," he wrote a few days after the layoffs and while he was still an employee of the site. "A venture has to be given a chance to succeed before it can fail."²²

The TBD.com experiment shows that there is still work to be done in successfully integrating social media and new news models. However, there is little doubt that social media, audience involvement, and mobile technologies represent future growth areas for journalism. "I think social media, and more importantly Facebook and Twitter, [have] opened the doors for us to reach out to the community. Instead of waiting for people to call us, we can reach out to them," says O'Keefe.²³ And Jim Brady has said that Twitter "is truly the police scanner of the 21st century."

Social media will certainly be an integral part of reporting from now on. In fact, Vadim Lavrusik, Community Manager and Social Strategist at Mashable, says that in time, *all* media will become social media and *all* consumers will become potential journalists:

The future of social media in journalism will see the death of "social media." That is, all media as we know it today will become social, and feature a social component to one extent or another. After all, much of the web experience, particularly in the way we consume content, is becoming social and personalized.

But more importantly, these social tools are inspiring readers to become citizen journalists by enabling them to easily publish and share information on a greater scale. The future journalist will be more embedded with the community than ever, and news outlets will build their newsrooms to focus on utilizing the community and enabling its members to be enrolled as correspondents.²⁴

WHAT'S NEXT

Now that we have examined the basic landscape of online journalism, including the organizational structures and audience involvement in the journalistic process, we are ready to look at some of the technical considerations of online journalism. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the Internet and some of the hardware, software and media associated with producing online journalism. The processes of creating online journalism will build on this technical understanding.

activities



- 3.1** Look at some local news websites to find examples of stories demonstrating various levels of audience participation in the journalistic process.
- 3.2** Find examples of some stories that might have benefited from increased audience participation. How might these stories have been strengthened using crowdsourcing, for example?
- 3.3** If you have a smartphone, find out if any of your local media sites have apps. If they do, download them and try them out. How does the experience differ from accessing content from the organization's website?
- 3.4** Assess the degree of your local media's involvement with social media. Are they using it at all? If so, what areas are they using it in, and how might they improve their outreach to the audience through social media?

endnotes

- * In Chapter 3, quotations by the following individuals are from interviews/personal communication with them by the author: Rob Curley, Linda Fantin, Raju Nariseti, Christoph Trappe and Katharine Zaleski.
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